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AUTHOR Witham, Joan; Linehan, Patricia
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ABSTRACT

Elementary school teachers (N=109) were surveyed regarding their use of pretesting to determine individual student instructional needs prior to teaching units of the regular curriculum. Teachers varied in their amount of teaching experience and possession of specialized endorsements--33 teachers had an endorsement in gifted/talented education and 14 teachers had an endorsement in learning disabilities or other special education area. Slightly more than half the sample reported they felt that pretests were worth the time, give children a feel for what will be expected of them, and should be used more often. However, almost half of respondents felt that pretests are too time consuming, not necessary, only work in certain subjects, and are not practical. Thirty percent of respondents did not ever pretest classes in spelling or reading, 36 percent did not pretest in language arts/ grammar, 17 percent did not pretest in math, 52 percent did not pretest in social studies, and 47 percent did not pretest in science. (Contains 15 references.) (DB)

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ABSTRACT

Pretesting: Is it a Strategy Used with Inclusion?

Pretesting is a key to tailoring instruction for mainstreamed students and for others in need of differentiation of the regular curriculum. This study explores the issue of how often and for what purpose pretesting is being used in regular classrooms to meet the needs of these diverse populations.

TWO SESSION PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Joan Witham, Assistant Professor
Southwest Texas State University
Curriculum and Instruction
San Marcos, TX 78666
512-245-3084

Patricia Linehan
Wm. Penn College
Psychology Department
Oskaloosa, IA 50207
515-673-1073

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on three dimensions: years of teaching experience, the holding of specialized endorsements, and grade level taught.

Subjects N = 109 working teachers

Grade Level Currently Teaching
- 54 grades K-3
- 42 grades 4-6
- 8 all elementary grades (pullout/resource programs)
- 5 did not answer this item

Level of Teaching Experience
- 35 1-4 years
- 42 5-14 years
- 35 15-36 years
- 3 did not answer

Specialized Endorsements
- 62 no special endorsement
- 33 Gifted/Talented Endorsement
- 14 LD or other Special Education Endorsement

Instrument

The instrument used to examine attitudes and practices involving pretesting was a researcher-designed questionnaire, entitled Pretest Survey. It consisted of 64 items. Three items asked group dimension questions on current grade being taught, years of teaching experience, and endorsements held. Twenty-five items addressed attitudes toward pretesting and training in the utilization of pretests. Examples: "Pretests are too time consuming for me to prepare and score." "My teaching methods classes stressed pretesting as a valuable technique." These attitude items were answered on a 5 point Likert Scale anchored in Strongly Agree and Strongly Disagree. One item asked and open-ended question which was analyzed qualitatively: "Why do you pretest? What function does the pretest serve for you?" The remaining questionnaire items asked frequency of pretest usage questions for different populations and in different subject areas.

Internal reliabilities for 5 attitudes and utilization subsets were run using Cronbach Alpha:

Teacher Training for Pretesting .	.67
Pretesting .	.77
Endorsement Classes Taught Pretesting .	.78
Useful for Exceptional Learners .	.89

Results

A. Comparison of Gifted Talented Endorsement/No Endorsement

Higher mean scores indicate higher agreement

T-Tests:

Subsets	Means		T Value	Probability
Endorsement	No	Yes		
Teacher training including pretesting	9.08	4.39	.762	.447
Negative attitude toward pretesting	15.45	13.42	2.254	.026*
Positive attitude toward pretesting	21.88	23.18	-1.189	.237
Useful for exceptional students	7.79	7.90	- .303	.762

Do you sometimes give INDIVIDUALS pretests rather than the whole class?
YES: 39 NO 54

	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51
Spelling	17	8	2	3	3	0	1	1	2	0	0	1
Reading	13	16	6	3	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
LA/Grammar	15	16	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Math	8	16	5	2	3	2	2	1	2	0	0	0
Social Studies	23	6	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Science	25	5	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

Approximate number of individual pretests given per year at the lesson level:

	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51
Spelling	23	9	0	0	1	2	0	0	2	1	0	0
Reading	25	9	2	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
LA/Grammar	24	8	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Math	18	12	2	2	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	1
Social Studies	26	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Science	26	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

(Item #29) Why use pretests? What function does the pretest serve for you?
Answers in this open-ended question were divided into 5 categories, which were developed from the data:

Total respondents to this item: 78

16	use pretesting to group
34	use pretesting to find a starting point
4	use pretesting to save time
16	use pretesting to change content
8	use pretesting to help individualize

Discussion

Results of this survey research show elementary teachers have a fairly positive view of pretesting, though certainly not an overwhelmingly positive view. If one collapses Strongly Agree with Agree, and Strongly Disagree with Disagree, we see that almost half the sample (109) feel pretests are too time consuming, not necessary, only work in certain subjects, and are not practical. But over half the sample also feel pretests are worth the time, that pretests give kids a feel for what will be expected of them, that they are both good theory and usable tools and should be used more. Eight-six percent of the respondents felt "Pretests help teachers prepare lessons that are more on target." Seventy-six percent of the respondents felt "Pretesting is necessary to individualize instruction." Seventy-nine percent felt "Pretests are helpful in planning instruction for gifted learners." Eighty-two percent felt the same way about pretests helping slow learners. Seventy-two percent felt that pretests should be used more.

So why aren't pretests used more?

Large numbers of respondents did not report usage of pretests at all — even in those highly-pretest-compatible subjects, spelling and math. Thirty percent did not ever pretest classes in spelling, 30% did not pretest classes in reading, 36% did not in language arts/grammar, 17% did not pretest in math, 52% did not in social studies, and 47% did not pretest in science. When asked about pretesting individuals, the number of responses dropped dramatically and the percentages of

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